



National Rail Enquiry Service Bulletin Board System

Challenge

To provide a quick and cost effective method of improving traveller confidence in the United Kingdom's rail industry by providing up-to-date information on changes to scheduled timetables

Approach

To implement a bulletin board system in IPTIS so that incidents affecting particular journeys are presented to call centre agents as they perform enquiries

Results

- Increased information accuracy: Information affecting timetables that is not available in the industry data (e.g. engineering works, incidents) is presented to IPTIS users while performing enquiries affected by the information. This removes the need for call centre agents to attempt to keep abreast of the numerous notices that occur.
- Decreased call duration: Only the relevant bulletins are displayed for particular journeys. This reduces the time taken by IPTIS users browsing through lists of potentially unrelated bulletins and eliminates the risk agents will forget a particular bulletin relates to a caller's journey.
- Improved accuracy and call waiting times have led to increased customer confidence and a reduction in negative customer feedback and customer after care.

National Rail Enquiries, in the United Kingdom, answers in excess of 50 million calls per year. The UK rail network involves more than 25 different train operating companies and millions of journey and fare combinations. The IPTIS journey planning system has been used by National Rail Enquiries since 1998 and is now used by all National Rail Enquiries call centres and the NRE on-line website to answer queries about the best way to travel by rail and what fares are available on particular journeys. This involves the application of complex rules that define the validity of tickets and routes in the UK.

The National Rail Communication Centre (NRCC) is responsible for compiling and managing incident information in the UK.

This includes late timetable changes not added to the timetable database and unplanned events such as severe weather conditions that affect the normal running of services.

National Rail Enquiries approached Carmen to build a bulletin board system that would enable NRCC staff to attach bulletins to specific journeys in IPTIS.

This project involved close collaboration between Carmen, National Rail Enquiries, call centre providers and the National Rail Communication Centre. The end result is a system that provides integration between the IPTIS journey planner and the information provided by the NRCC. The Bulletin Board System has been in live use since July 2003 and is allowing National Rail Enquiries to deliver enormous benefits to the rail passenger by providing more accurate information faster.

John Truelove, Quality Manager for National Rail Enquiries has observed the benefits gained by the system. "It is testimony to the bulletin facility that we are considering the provision of this service to our on-line journey planner to alert internet users to the same changes".

National Rail Enquiry Service

The National Rail Enquiry Service (NRES) was set up in June 1996 as part of the privatization process. The rail industry's tradition of providing information on its services stretches back to the start of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1830. More recently, British Rail had established a national network of telephone enquiry bureaux. NRES brought this together in a single service, provided on a single national number. Initially NRES answered some 40 million calls per year, using 1,000 staff at around 40 call centres. The service now answers in excess of 50 million calls per year, using 1,700 staff at four call centres.

NRES has also developed the National Rail internet site now receiving more than five million visitors per year, a major development being the Real Time Train Running Information Service, launched initially for 50 stations in December 2001.

The IPTIS Bulletin Board was a finalist in the UK's Information Management Awards 2003 and the system is now also available for use in IPTIS deployments outside of the United Kingdom.

About Carmen Systems

Carmen Systems is recognised as one of the world's leading software and operations research companies. Headquartered in Goteborg, Sweden, Carmen has major offices in Brisbane, Singapore, London, Montreal, Stockholm and Copenhagen. Carmen's products are:

- **IPTIS**
Public transport journey planning
- **CRS**
Rail crew management
- **RSD**
Real time freight car planning
- **CCM**
Airline crew management
- **PlanOp**
Distribution and logistics network planning
- **OR Services**
Operations research consulting

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*John Truelove
Quality Manager
National Rail Enquiries*



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